



The Mountain-Prairie Review

[Http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/ea](http://mountain-prairie.fws.gov/ea)

June 2002



**"Mallard Morning" by Nathan Closson, 18
Whitefish, Montana
Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest Winner**

Montana Teen Wins Duck Stamp Contest

By Deserai Anderson-Utley

"Mallard Morning," by Nathan Closson of Whitefish, Montana, won the annual Federal Junior Duck Stamp Design Contest. The 18-year-old artist's portrayal of a pair of mallards was judged the winner against top paintings from all 50 states, the District of Columbia and American Samoa. The first place painting will become the 2002-2003 Federal Junior Duck Stamp.

Closson's message on the back of his acrylic painting reads, "Now is the time to conserve."

The Junior Duck Stamp Contest supports a scholarship program for contest winners. The contest is the culmination of a year-long conservation and education curriculum throughout high schools across the country. The three top artists get a free trip to Washington, D.C., along with their art teacher and a parent. The winner also gets a \$2,500 scholarship. The stamps can now be purchased by way of the U.S. Postal Service, via telephone or web. The phone number is 1-800-545-1212. The web address is: <http://www.usps.com>.

Free Wildlife Image CDs Available

The Regional External Affairs Office has a small supply of the popular "Image Collection" CDs available. Volume I is critters and Service staff, Volume II is just critters. These images are all public use and make great additions to your station or Friends newsletter and media products.

Call Jean Clemens at (303) 236-7905 or drop her an e-mail to get your copy. "First come, first served" while supplies last.

Chocolate Deadly to Birds: Alert to Livestock Owners

By Deserai Anderson-Utley

What some farmers are feeding their dairy cows can be deadly to wildlife. A farmer in Vermont alerted the Service to the problem after he spotted several dead ring-billed gulls on his property. Chocolate, a supplement added to some dairy cow feed, is suspected of killing the birds. The Service found that thiobromine and caffeine in the chocolate are toxic to the birds. These ingredients can be deadly to other animals, such as dogs and foxes. Due to the bird deaths, farmers are being asked to store and use this type of feed supplement so that birds and wildlife cannot access it.

Table of Content:

Duck Stamp Contest	1
Free Wildlife Image CDs ...	1
Chocolate Deadly to Birds. 1	
Field Notes	2
Wildlife Internet Images ...	2
LE Training	3
Eagles Electrocution	3
NFH New Web Site	4
AO Workshop	4
More Working the Web	5
CAP	5
Get Out and Enjoy Nature..	6
American Indian Law	
Course	6
FWS Credit Card	
Policy.....	6

Field Notes

By Dan Sobieck

The wind is strong on Crow Flies High Butte overlooking the Missouri River at New Town, North Dakota. Named after a Hidatsa Chief, the Butte features gusts so strong they'll support your weight—at least momentarily— if you lean into them. Below the butte sprawls a wind-scoured sweep of the Missouri – Lake Sakakawea; to the north and to the horizon lay a series of high rolling hills – the Missouri Coteau. A few miles south is Reunion Bay, that river place where scouting parties led by Lewis and Clark reunited in August of 1806, after a month's separation.

At New Town, if you have a few hours to spare, your easy choices are Lostwood NWR to the north, or Audubon NWR to the east. The wind blows strongly here from the southeast, so you go with the grain, turn the vehicle north on Hwy 8, and head into the Coteau.

Within minutes the landscape changes dramatically. There is water here and many ducks – the drakes brightly colored, the hens drab and often unseen in plain view. Shovelers and blue-winged teal are at their finest and common in the thin water, while canvasbacks, redheads and the occasional scaup ply the larger waterscapes. Mallards claim title to the wetlands in between.

Lostwood NWR typifies the northern Coteau and offers visitors a host of surprises – a 5,500 acre designated grassland wilderness, sharptail grouse, and the federally-listed piping plover.

Coyote scat litters the trails and roadways. The sharptails, now off their leks, flush wildly then glide with set wings over the next hill crest (for you are always on a hill in the Coteau). The larger potholes here are turbid and rimmed in white, like giant margaritas. Although alkaline and foul smelling, they offer a hearty soup of taste treats for waterfowl later in the year.

This is a grand place for waterfowl, shorebirds and other wetland creatures. Native mixed-grass prairie and wetland densities of up to 150 potholes per square mile combine to make the northern Coteau some of the most productive waterfowl habitat on the continent. With Saskatchewan dry this year, it's likely the Coteau will be the most productive habitat around. Still, Service biologists won't know until sometime in June the toll that spring storms, cool weather and other variables will have on waterfowl production. And despite the water here, "dry" and "bone dry" are the adjectives of choice when describing the outlook across the prairie pothole region.

When the light wanes, you turn the vehicle south toward New Town and the river again. The southeast wind assaults the vehicle during the 45- minute trip.

The wind howls all night. In the morning, the gulls of the Missouri wake you at first light.

Wildlife Conservation Photographs on Internet



Anyone who has ever looked for a picture of an eagle, a duck, or just a kid fishing, can now find what they need in over 2,000 photographs now available via the Internet from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. This unique collection of photographs is dedicated solely to fish and wildlife, wildlands, and wildlife conservation efforts. The copyright-free images have been digitized and loaded into a searchable database and are available from downloading in high and low resolutions from the new web site: <http://images.fws.gov/>.

The pictures include a comprehensive collection of waterfowl and wildlife species, as well as shots of wildlife habitats. The library also includes images of wildlife management and scientific field activities involving a wide variety of species.

Region 6 Law Enforcement



Law Enforcement Training in Billings, Montana

In May, Region 6 Law Enforcement conducted law enforcement training in Billings, Montana, for 36 Native American Conservation Officers from New Mexico, Montana, Michigan, Mississippi, Arizona, Nebraska and South Dakota. Sixteen tribes were represented.

The agenda consisted of an overview of Federal wildlife laws, interviewing and interrogations, and crime scene processing. Firearms training included traditional qualifications, as well as simunitions (soft bullet) training. Simunitions allows the students to test their use of force skills against instructors in realistic scenarios.

Montana State game wardens and a State biologist also addressed the import and export regulations related to the eagle feathers. In the past six years, Region 6 has provided formal wildlife law enforcement training to over 450 tribal members.



Special Agent Leo Suazo



Dan Matiatos with a Red-tailed Hawk

MOU With Xcel Energy Will Save Eagles from Electrocution in 12 States

In April, Regional Director Ralph Morgenweck and Xcel Energy officials signed an agreement to reduce eagle, large raptor and migratory bird injuries and electrocutions on electrical lines across 12 states in the north-central and southwestern United States. As part of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Xcel Energy made a commitment to develop an avian protection plan and work with the Service to ensure all 90,000 miles of its electrical lines and facilities become more bird friendly.

This voluntary agreement, developed by Special Agent Leo Suazo, the Regional LE office, Xcel Energy representatives and Department of Justice (DOJ) attorneys, is the first such proactive agreement of its kind in the United States and will likely save thousands of birds from a fate of electrocution.

Raptor mortality from electrocution probably numbers in the tens of thousands each year in the United States. Birds with wide wingspans, like bald and golden eagles, large hawks, and owls run the greatest risk of electrocution, which occurs when their bodies close a circuit between two electrical wires. Such electrocutions frequently result in the death of the bird and cause power outages. Fortunately, these avian electrocutions can often be prevented by designing and engineering protection measures – such as using wider spacing between power lines, creating attractive perches away from dangerous locations, and installing insulation material on wires.

Under the MOU, Xcel Energy will undertake a comprehensive review of all its electrical facilities and develop a long-term plan to modify those likely to cause death or significant injury to birds. These actions will ensure the company's compliance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and the Bald and Golden Eagle Protection Act, which impose criminal penalties when raptors and other protected species of birds are electrocuted on power lines. The agreement, signed at the Rocky Mountain Arsenal in Denver, covers Xcel Energy's power lines in 12 states: Arizona, Colorado, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, South Dakota, Texas, Wisconsin and Wyoming.

It is expected that many of the state wildlife agencies in the 12 states involved in the agreement will also sign on as cooperators.

Admin Staff Gather for Regional Workshop

By Elliott Sutta

Over 100 administrative personnel from Region 6's NWRS, FR, and ES field stations met for a workshop recently in Colorado Springs, in the first such meeting since December 1998. This workshop's agenda was mostly generated by the field stations. Conference calls between the RO Program Offices and coordinating field stations were followed by calls between those stations and the other program field stations. This was purposefully done out of earshot of the RO. Eventually, 20 different administrative topics were offered. The workshop was complemented by two keynote speakers, and a welcome and general Q&A session with DRD John Blankenship.

Elliott Sutta, ARD-BA, spoke on how administrative life in the Service has radically changed for some functions and minimally for others. Policy and procedural changes continue to emanate from Washington, and the RO serves as a translator by anticipating, adopting, and adapting those WO directions for field use. Field stations continue to serve as the final implementation of administrative programs – this is where the rubber meets the road.

Barbara Ritter was a keynote speaker. Her first Service job, as a clerk-typist, resulted from taking an after-school typing course. From that, she parlayed typing and then editing all the way into making programmatic changes in legislative recommendations for Alaska resource management. She moved through a series of jobs in various Service locations across the nation, culminating in her current position of Chief of Budget Execution in WO Budget. Barbara was forthright with her audience and acknowledged the mobility that contributed to her success may not be available to all field administrative officers. Yet she still feels administrative officers could expand their experiences right at their stations to grow intellectually and professionally.

The instructional materials used for each workshop session are being assembled on a CD for distribution to all field stations, as is a complete hard copy of the Region 6 Delegation of Authority Manual. Participant evaluations will be used to prepare for the next administrative workshop, to be held in another few years.

National Fish Hatcheries has a cool new website

By Karen Miranda Gleason

Region 6 National Fish Hatcheries has a brand new website on-line, built with the help of Michele Dutton, Computer Specialist with Regional Office Fisheries Staff.

The website features:

- Species and production information
- Stocking location maps
- And more

To visit the National Fish Hatcheries home page that includes all hatchery locations and stocking maps for: Colorado, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota, go to:

<http://www.r6.fws.gov/fisheries/>

Fisheries



More Working the Web

By Sue Zirbes

I wanted to pick up on Ralph's excellent column in the last issue of "Mountain-Prairie Review," because the web is an outreach tool important to all of us in the Service. That especially holds for our Regional Director, whose performance standards now include supporting the President's "e-Gov" initiative. While much of "e-Gov" pertains to electronic business, "e-Gov" also covers making Federal information available to the public in easy to obtain electronic, accessible format, and the web is a perfect tool for that purpose.

A well-organized web presence, with relevant and updated content, can educate the public and garner their support. A good example of a developing and effective web presence in Region 6 is the Fisheries effort, coordinated and developed in large part by Fisheries IT Coordinator Michele Dutton. You can explore this system of interconnected web sites starting at <http://www.r6.fws.gov/fisheries/>.

Refuges is in the process of developing guidelines for its field station web sites and establishing priorities in finishing sites for individual Refuges. With upcoming events like the Lewis and Clark Bicentennial, the Refuge Centennial and the Fisheries 130th Anniversary, it is essential to have a web presence to tell the public about upcoming special events and recreational opportunities.

While several of our Region 6 field stations have developed the web sites locally (always the best situation), many do not have someone available to do this. When no local web author is available, the Regional IT community wants to fill the gap by doing site development. Even if a web site is developed in the Regional Office, input and content is needed from the field station. Even simple information, such as the most frequently asked questions over the telephone, can go a long way in the development of a quality web site that can aid in decreasing work for a field station. Photos always enrich a publication, and the web is no exception, and we count on those coming from our field stations. A web presence is the perfect place to tout your accomplishments, tell your story or solicit for Friends Groups or volunteers. The web is a tool that is too valuable to ignore, so if you get a call from Jim Renne, our webmaster, or your IT coordinator, please help them to help you!

The Lander Fish and Wildlife Management Assistance Office is now on-line!

Find out about the Conservation Projects, Species, Partnerships, and Public Information in Wyoming at: <http://lander.fws.gov>

Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program

By Deserai Anderson-Utley

The Computer/Electronic Accommodations Program (CAP) is paving the way for people with disabilities to access information technology opportunities within the Federal Government. The program, started at the Department of Defense in 1990, helps eliminate barriers for disabled people by providing them with assistive technology and services, while charging the agency nothing.

CAP provides services to employees with hearing, dexterity, vision, cognitive, and communication disabilities through various technologies and assessment services.

In 2000, CAP was given the authority to provide any government agency with the technology and devices that it needs, at no cost, at the request of the head of the agency. The program helps recruit disabled people to the Federal workforce, enables employees to return to work with ease after a worker's compensation injury, promotes teleworking for people with disabilities, and trains agency staff to understand and provide appropriate resources for employees with disabilities.

For more information about CAP, or any of its programs, contact (703) 681-8813, or (703) 681-0881 (TTY) or go on-line to <http://www.tricare.osd.mil/cap>.

Get Out and Enjoy Nature

By Ralph Morgenweck

It's been said that the perfect day is when the birds are singing, the sky is blue and the lawnmower is broken. Now, I'm not going to give you any tips on lawnmower maintenance, but I am going to offer a suggestion: get out and enjoy the fruits of your labor.

That's right—forget about the lawnmower. Get out and enjoy nature and some of her wild places – places that each and every one of you are helping to preserve and protect.

Sometimes we get so bogged down with the bureaucracy of our jobs, that we forget what all of our paper pushing accomplishes. Some of us may not be lucky enough to have jobs that get us in the field doing actual on-the-ground work – but make no mistake—all of us and everything we do, whether or not we get our fingernails dirty, are part of keeping these places wild and natural.

So, go on – take a hike, ride your bike, go fishing, add some birds to your life list and take a moment to reflect on what we do and why we do it.

Thanks for all your hard work! And do keep it up, but remember to take a moment to reflect on the wonderment that you all help conserve.

Policy about using the FWS Credit Card while Traveling for FWS

By Linda Stevens

Service employees can only use the FWS credit card while traveling for the FWS. They can't use the FWS credit card while traveling for the Reserves.

A reserve unit informed one of our employees that they could use any government credit card while they are on their annual reserve duty, which is not completely true. This is because there is an extremely high chance that Department of Defense expenses would be billed to the Service.

If your reserve unit has been given different guidance and you wish to talk about this, please contact your reserve unit coordinator, Kathy Buckhouse. She can be reached at 303-236-7917 ext. 410 or via email, kathy_buckhouse@fws.gov.

American Indian Law Course

By David Redhorse

The Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara Nations (Three Affiliated Tribes) co-hosted the 2002 *American Indian and Cultural and Natural Resources Management: The Law and Practice Regarding Federal Lands* course in May on the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Next year the course may be held in the Southwest.

This course was developed by a consortium of federal land management agencies and Professor Raymond Cross, University of Montana School of Law, to provide federal agency personnel with fundamentals of American Indian law as it pertains to federal lands and resources. The course offered a comprehensive overview of treaties, laws, executive orders, regulations, policies and court cases that focused on American Indian access to, and use of, cultural and natural resources managed by federal agencies. Classroom presentations were combined with group discussion of “real world” situations where federal agency responsibilities, priorities, laws and legal mandates were explored.

Students were treated to a buffalo dinner with traditional side dishes, and to a reenactment of a public meeting on the construction of the Garrison Dam of the Missouri River that inundated the lands of the Three Affiliated Tribes.

This year Roger Collins, Mike Olson, Dan Sobieck, and David Wiseman, with Fish and Wildlife Service, completed the course. They were among other federal personnel from DOE, ACOE, FS, BR, NPS, BIA, DOI Solicitor, Hills Air Force Base, and some of their partners, and tribal members from Standing Rock, Yankton, Sisseton-Wapeton, and Three Affiliated Tribes.

The Mountain-Prairie Review is a monthly publication produced by the USFWS Region 6 External Affairs Office. Publisher: Ralph Morgenweck, Regional Director; Editor: Dan Sobieck, ARD-EA; Staff Writers: Deserae Anderson-Utley, Karen Miranda Gleason, Matt Kales, Diane Katzenberger, David Redhorse, Sharon Rose; Design and Layout: Heather Gonzalez, IRM/ Jean Clemens, EA. All contributions from Region 6 employees are welcomed and will be considered for publication.